



## Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Rep. Shuler Introduces Legislation to Provide Access to Catawba Falls**

*Washington, D.C.* – Representative Heath Shuler announced today that he has introduced legislation to adjust the boundaries of the Pisgah National Forest by 335 acres to allow the public better access to Catawba Falls in McDowell County. Included in this acreage will be 96 acres currently owned by a land trust organization. The remaining 239 acres are already owned by the Forest Service, but not within the official boundaries of the Pisgah National Forest.

The U.S. Forest Service acquired Catawba Falls in 1989, but was unable to acquire the 96 acres that would provide access to the falls. This lack of access has prevented the public from visiting the falls and local businesses from capitalizing on increased tourist traffic. Currently the tract is owned by the Foothills Conservancy, a North Carolina based land trust organization that purchased the land with the intention of transferring it to the U.S. Forest Service.

“The acquisition of this land will provide tremendous recreation benefits to the people of Western North Carolina and all Americans. Access to Catawba Falls and increased recreational opportunities will also promote our local economy and businesses through increased tourist dollars,” Rep. Shuler said.

The Foothills Conservancy will donate approximately 12% of the tract to the Forest Service. The remaining portion of the land will be purchased through the regular appropriations process. Rep. Shuler’s bill, H.R. 4155, must be passed before federal funds could be appropriated for the purchase of the land.

The acquisition of this land tract is supported by the City of Old Fort, the McDowell County Tourism Authority, the McDowell County Chamber of Commerce, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners, and local hiking and hunting groups.

Additionally, it has the support in both the House and Senate. Senator Richard Burr will introduce companion legislation in the Senate to Rep. Shuler’s bill today.

“North Carolina’s public lands are some of our state’s greatest assets,” Senator Burr said. “The Pisgah National Forest provides tremendous environmental and economic benefits to McDowell County. Providing trail access to Catawba Falls will drive tourists to the area and allow North Carolinians to enjoy the beauty of their state.”

“I am glad to be working with Senator Burr on this issue and look forward to quick passage of this legislation,” Rep. Shuler concluded.

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